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C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 000791

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [IH](#)

SUBJECT: LITHUANIAN IRAQ DEPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

REF: A) STATE 150164 B) VILNIUS 759 C) VILNIUS 121

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN CLOUD FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. We have conducted an assessment of the legal and political challenges posed to Lithuania by the expiration of a UN Chapter VII mandate per ref A. We conclude that the GOL will not raise any legal concerns, but we believe the political opponents of participation in Iraq will use this situation and other political considerations as weapons to attack deployment supporters in the government and to prevent future deployments. End summary.

¶2. (C) Lithuania currently has international troop deployments in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. These deployments fall under the Lithuanian Parliament's blanket authorization for up to 420 troops in international missions, valid until 2010, based on the decision of the Minister of Defense. The next Lithuanian troop deployment to Iraq will be under U.S. command (ref B), and we do not foresee any legal difficulties if a SOFA or mandate covering forces under U.S. command were to be used to cover Lithuanian troops. We believe that, of the scenarios presented in ref A, the GOL would most likely prefer scenario A whereby Lithuania would become a party to an agreement concluded between GOI and USG after being a participant in negotiation. This would give Lithuania the benefit of using the clout of the USG to ensure a favorable agreement while giving the GOL at least the visible status as a fellow negotiator that didn't just take a deal, but helped to create it. The GOL's initial decision to enter Iraq was made with eyes wide open, and was characterized both publicly and privately as a coalition of the willing. We do not believe that operating without the umbrella of a United Nations Chapter VII mandate will be a significant legal issue for the GOL.

¶3. (C) We do, however, see political considerations causing trouble for any deployments beyond the next one, and loss of Chapter VII cover will not help in this regard. Recently, several members of the parliament publicly complained about not having been consulted on the most recent decision for Lithuanian troop deployment in Iraq (ref C). Some MPs who have not voiced their concerns publicly have privately expressed the sentiment that, while not required by law, DefMin Olekas should have discussed the deployment with parliament as a courtesy. While we do not face the kind of constant, public calls for Lithuania to pull out of Iraq as do some of our European colleagues, the most recent Gallup poll of public opinion in Lithuania found 83 percent of respondents were opposed to the war in Iraq and 68 percent opposed the presence of Lithuanian troops in Iraq.

¶4. (C) In addition, some members of the GOL -- including

Defense Minister Olekas -- have previously tried to prevent continued deployments to Iraq (ref B). Significant diplomatic effort was required to reach agreement on the upcoming deployment (ref C). Olekas is now publicly committed to at least one more six-month deployment, but has been careful with his language, for example stating that Lithuania will consider additional rotations, but has no plans for a follow-on deployment at this time. Other factors would also make future deployments difficult. Any troop withdrawal by Poland will create an even more difficult political environment in Lithuania for supporting continued deployments. In addition, we expect it would be hard for the GOL to sustain a deployment if any casualties are suffered by Lithuanian troops in Iraq. Finally, parliamentary elections are scheduled for mid-October of 2008 and we predict that many MPs will come out against future deployments for the reasons mentioned above. Any additional hurdles, including the loss of a Chapter VII mandate, will only give them more "reasons" to point to for withdrawal.

¶5. (C) Even without the failure to renew the Chapter VII mandate, we will have our work cut out for us to sustain the Lithuanian contribution in Iraq. The GOL generally views its contributions in Afghanistan as its number one priority. Lithuania runs the PRT in Ghor province, and gets constant positive feedback on this contribution at NATO meetings. To the GOL, Iraq and Afghanistan commitments compete with each other. If we hope to keep Lithuania engaged in both, we must be careful not to send conflicting messages about where our priorities lie.

CLOUD